

News Release



Olivier Ponti, VP Insights, ForwardKeys

Coronavirus causes collapse in Chinese travel

But most Chinese New Year holidaymakers left before travel restrictions

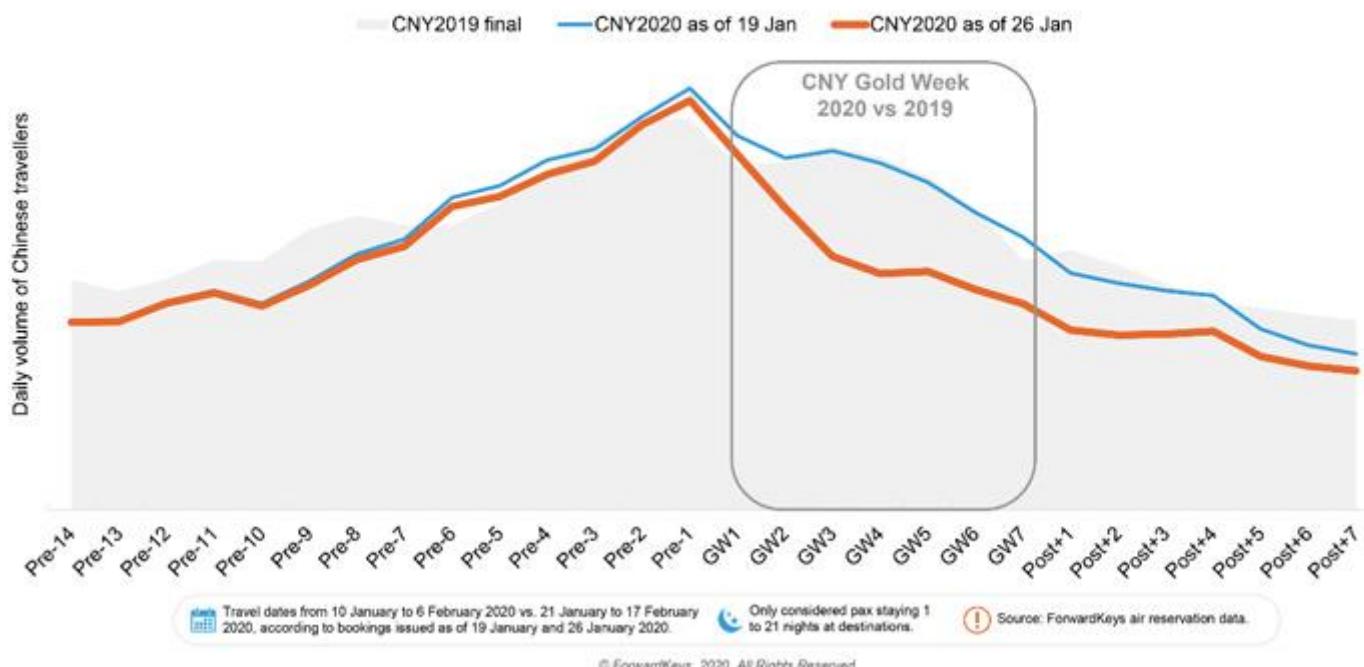
30th January 2020

The latest data from ForwardKeys, which analyses global aviation capacity, flight searches and over 17 million flight booking transactions a day, reveals that the outbreak of infection in China from the coronavirus has caused a substantial setback in flight bookings for the Chinese New Year period, 10th January – 6th February 2020.

The Chinese New Year holiday season typically begins a fortnight before Golden Week; and travel reaches its peak just before Golden Week starts. This year, outbound travel reached a new peak and the season was on course to break all records. However, on the week of 20th January, travel restrictions were introduced; and the last batch of Chinese holidaymakers were forced to stay at home. By 26th January a slew of cancellations had changed the picture dramatically. Although the vast majority had left before the travel restrictions took effect, the prospect of a record-breaking year was gone.

Chinese air arrivals in worldwide regions for Chinese New Year, before vs one week after the travel restrict

10 January – 6 February, Bookings made as of 19 January and 26 January 2020. Volumes of arrivals.

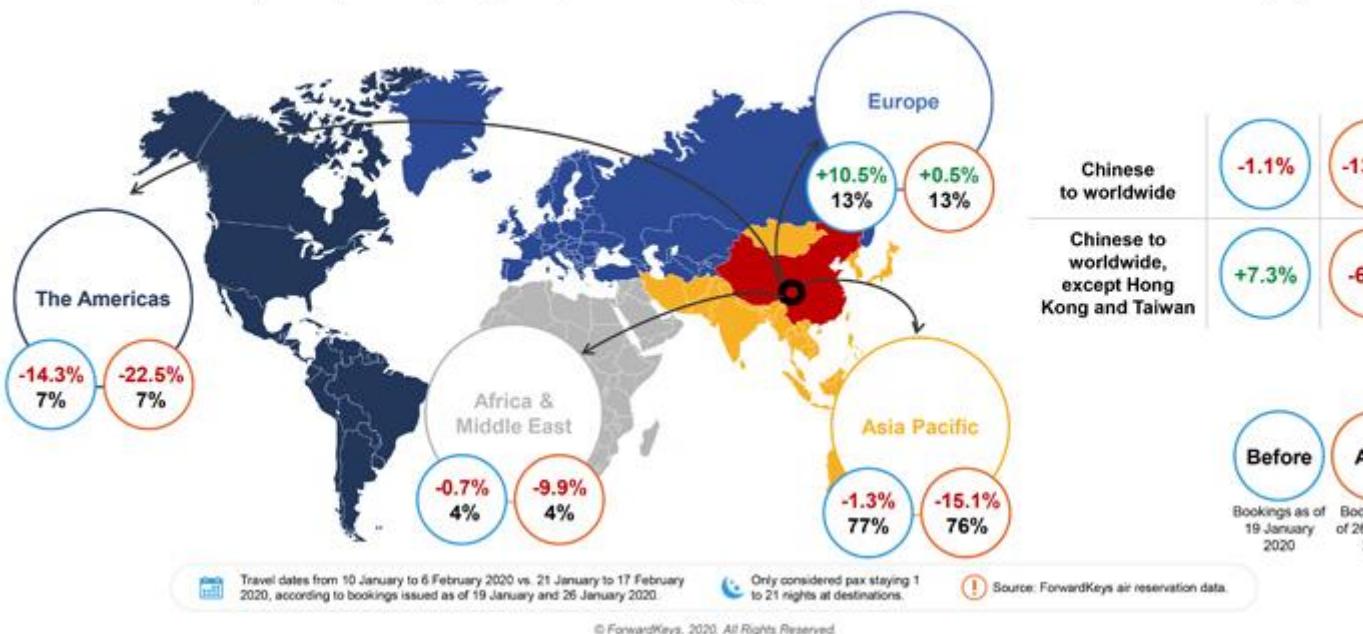


Up to 19th January, outbound travel bookings from China (excluding Hong Kong and Taiwan, where political unrest has impacted travel) were 7.3% ahead, benchmarked against the equivalent period in 2019; a week later, as of 26th January, when Wuhan airport was closed and the Chinese government stopped outbound tour groups from travelling, bookings for the Chinese holiday period were 6.8% behind.

The dramatic slowdown has affected travel to all parts of the world. Asia Pacific, the region which attracts over 75% of Chinese New Year travellers, has been worst hit. As of 19th January, bookings were 1.3% behind where they were at the equivalent moment in 2019; a week later, they were 15.1% behind. The deterioration seen for other global regions has been similar, but a little less severe. As of 19th January, bookings to the Americas were 14.3% behind, to Africa and the Middle East were 0.7% behind and to Europe were 10.5% ahead. A week later, bookings to the Americas were 22.5% behind, to Africa and the Middle East were 9.9% behind and to Europe were 0.5% ahead.

Chinese air arrivals in worldwide regions for Chinese New Year, before and one week after the travel restriction

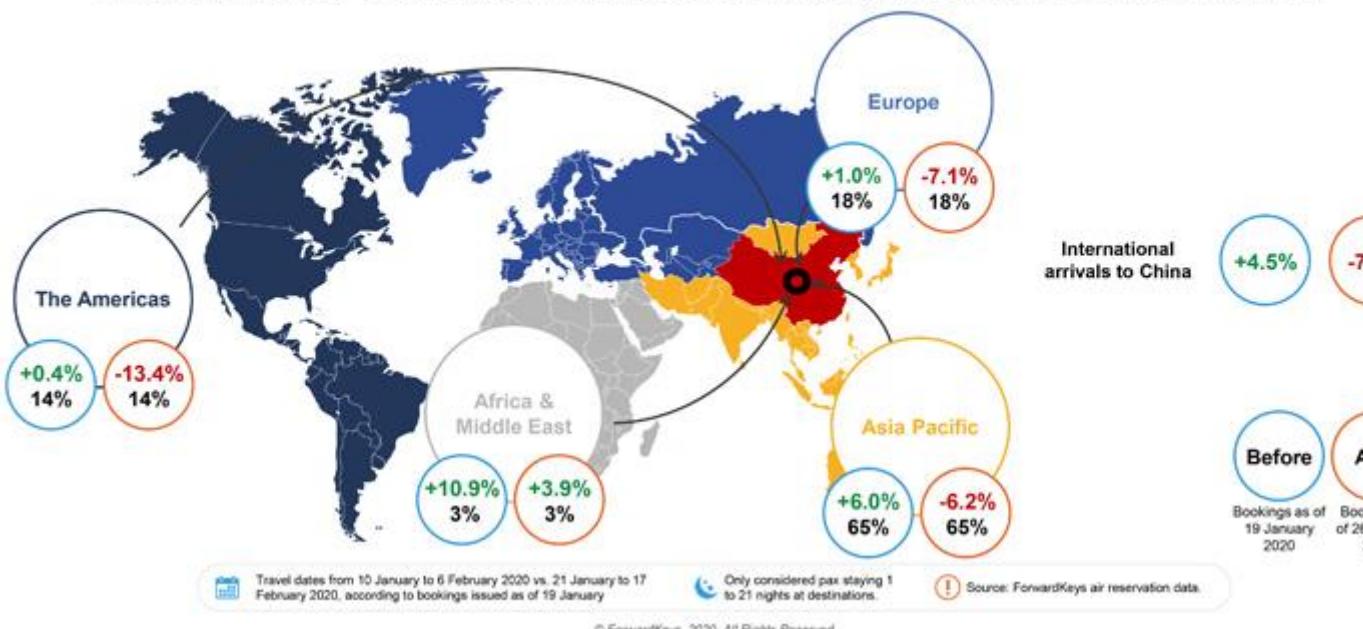
Chinese New Year (10 January – 6 February 2020), Bookings made as of 19 January and 26 January 2020. Year-on-Year variation and market shares by region



China as a destination has also been severely affected by the Coronavirus crisis. Up to 19th January, inbound bookings for the Chinese New Year period were 4.5% ahead of where they were at the equivalent point last year. A week later, they were 7.2% behind. The weakest origin market has been the Americas, where bookings fell from 0.4% ahead to 13.4% behind. Asia Pacific, China's largest source market, with a 65% share of visitors, has fallen from 6.0% ahead to 6.2% behind. A healthy growth in bookings from Africa & the Middle East has stalled from 10.9% ahead to 3.9% ahead and bookings from Europe have fallen from 1.0% ahead to 7.1% behind.

International air arrivals in China for Chinese New Year, before and one week after the travel restrictions

Chinese New Year (10 January – 6 February 2020), Bookings made as of 19 January and 26 January 2020. Year-on-Year variation and market shares by region



Olivier Ponti, VP Insights, ForwardKeys, commented: “Our sympathies are with the people of Wuhan, who are hemmed in, mourning loved ones. It’s a ghastly situation. The economic impact is bad too. China is now the world’s biggest and highest-spending outbound travel market, so the presence of Chinese visitors is eagerly anticipated by the tourism industry globally. The economic impact could have been worse if the coronavirus outbreak had struck a couple of weeks earlier. Fortunately, most Chinese holidaymakers managed to get away in time and as of now, we don’t see the collapse in travel to China spreading to other countries in the region. However, with the crisis evolving rapidly from day to day and a growing number of airlines cancelling flights to China, close monitoring is needed.”

Ends

About ForwardKeys

ForwardKeys helps its clients measure and improve the effectiveness of their marketing & operations; anticipate the impact of events; and capitalise on future trends. Its data scientists do so by analysing an unparalleled amount of air travel information to produce valuable insights into the profile, behaviour and impact of past, present and future travellers. Sources include airline capacity plus over 17m booking transactions and 7m flight searches per day. Customers are brands, retailers, duty-free specialists, financial institutions, media agencies and travel marketeers worldwide.

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